

Sharing and Using Intelligence in International Organizations: Some Guidelines*

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ABSTRACT

The nations of the world increasingly are conducting business collectively, through international organizations. Intelligence services, traditionally focused on serving the needs of single nations, are being called upon to work within a larger international framework and to cooperate with counterpart services in pursuit of shared objectives. Decisions about sharing intelligence information present special difficulties and dilemmas when they must involve international organizations. This article traces the evolution of intelligence sharing policies - largely from a US perspective - and offers some proposed guidelines for making more effective use of intelligence in a multilateral context.

In the abstract, intelligence is most valuable when it is uniquely available to only one person (or group or government). But it is only useful when it is made available to the person (or group or government) who can use it to change the course of history. This contradiction is the basic dilemma underlying all discussions about the sharing of intelligence - within governments, between governments, and within multinational organizations.

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** Helene Boatner died on January 9, 2000. She was on vacation in the Caribbean and died in a swimming accident. She was a vital and active person. She will be remembered for her service with the CIA and for her personal warmth and friendship.

Knowledge is power, and attempts to restrict its availability come naturally to those who delight in control. In the intelligence business, this tendency shows itself in ludicrous ways. For example, US President Harry Truman asked the Central Intelligence Group (CIG) to create a Daily Summary of incoming information for his consumption. Then he had to force the Secretary of State to give the necessary State Department cables to the CIG. To this day, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) struggles for access to the information considered most valuable and most sensitive by the other elements of the US Government that control the data, while the CIA also insists on maintaining tight control over a huge share of the material it collects. Thus sharing is not something that comes naturally to intelligence officers.

These problems become more and more difficult to deal with as the universe of potential sharers grows. It is one with which all intelligence services must struggle and one that confronts them with special difficulties as international organizations are increasingly becoming major actors on the international scene.

The following comments are based primarily on my two-year experience supporting the US Mission to the United Nations, which involved me in issues relating to the sharing of information with UN elements and helping them to improve their procedures for using and protecting such information. My prior background for the assignment encompassed 30 years spent producing and delivering US finished intelligence products to US customers and overseeing clearance of analytic work for sharing with other governments. My purpose is to delineate some general principles that I believe need to be understood as proposed international sharing arrangements are considered.

World War II and the Cold War

Most modern intelligence services are products of World War II and the Cold War, and the early decisions they made about sharing intelligence across nations grew out of military alliances against a common enemy. The US/UK "special relationship" and the broader cooperative arrangements involving the US, the UK, Canada, Australia and New Zealand were created in the early 1940s and became stronger and more complex with the passage of time. The US and the USSR also exchanged intelligence throughout the war. After the war, the Soviet Union became the leader of a competitive network, with strong central direction from Moscow and with the East European members playing specialized roles. The heads of the British, French and West German services also met regularly to share information on topics of common interest. (deMarenches & Andelman 1992, pp. 218-222; Richelson 1990, pp. 308-310; Johnson & Freyberg 1997)

In addition, intelligence services of “third world” countries were trained, nurtured, and brought into sharing relationships by “first” and “second” world sponsors who saw them as potential Cold War allies. The Arab countries shared intelligence with one another on Israel. The Israelis maintained strong contacts with France and formed a trilateral sharing arrangement with Iran and Turkey; they also shared intelligence about the Arabs bilaterally with many of the African countries. Similar intelligence sharing networks of varying degrees of closeness formed in clusters of nations that were pro- or anti- China, North Korea, etc. (deMarenches & Andelman 1992; Richelson 1990, Westerfield 1996)

As NATO and the Warsaw Pact grew into formal military organizations, intelligence elements were a natural development, and decisions had to be made about how to handle information collected by individual members within a multinational structure. All sorts of elaborate systems for sharing and compartmenting intelligence evolved - usually based on the nationalities of the individuals involved. Because these were elaborate military structures, their operations were highly codified and documented in great detail.

The underlying themes of these sharing relationships, whether bilateral or multilateral, were:

- ♦ the enemy of my enemy is my friend; and
- ♦ no sharing of intelligence about friends with other friends.

With the end of the Cold War and the collapse of the Warsaw Pact, however, these simple guidelines were not very useful. Who was the enemy? Who was the friend? And in any event the prospect of military conflict across national borders was no longer the central concern of most governments. Thus there were new issues about what to share, as well as with whom.

The Last Decade

By the end of the 1980s there were a number of subjects on which the NATO and Warsaw Pact countries had common interests - for example countering proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, deterring the flow of illicit drugs, countering terrorism, promoting peaceful resolution of international and civil conflict, and ensuring the safety of nuclear materials. These were not topics that could be addressed effectively in a purely military framework or on a national or regional basis. They demanded a truly international effort. New models were needed.

Concurrently, the end of the Cold War witnessed a revitalization of the United Nations. Suddenly the United States and Russia found common ground and began to cooperate at the UN, especially in the Security Council. With the support of four of the five

permanent members of the Council - and the reluctant acquiescence of the Chinese - UN peacekeeping missions proliferated. In 1994 almost 80,000 troops were serving in over 20 UN missions around the world. And they had begun to draw on UN member countries for intelligence to support those peacekeeping missions. The numbers are smaller now - about 14,000 personnel in 17 operations in the autumn of 1999, but the need for intelligence continues (Washington Post, November 13, 1999)

The US-Russia coincidence of views had particular relevance in the Middle East, which had long been an area for conflict between them. The two countries worked together to end the Iran-Iraq war, and the Russians were vigorously and vocally opposed to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait. They worked closely with their erstwhile NATO antagonists to develop and implement UN sanctions against Iraq and a UN regime intended to eliminate Iraq's potential for the use of nuclear, chemical and biological weapons, and they contributed personnel to the UN Special Commission on Iraq (UNSCOM) set up in 1991 to enforce that regime.

The Russians also cooperated with the US and other nations to enforce economic sanctions against several other countries, including Yugoslavia and Libya. And Moscow backed UN humanitarian missions - sometimes even with resources. Indeed, US-Russian mutual tolerance has even survived the breakup of Yugoslavia and the subsequent dispatch of UN and NATO missions to several areas of "greater Yugoslavia." And US and Russian troops are serving side by side in Kosovo, albeit not without periodic misunderstandings and frictions.

Intelligence at the UN

However, one judges the overall effectiveness of the UN and its agencies in peacekeeping, sanctions enforcement, arms control, stopping genocide and dealing with humanitarian emergencies Intelligence information provided by member countries, as well as information developed by UN entities and by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), has played a positive role. But the idea of sharing intelligence between national governments and the UN has required a seismic shift in attitudes and practices on all sides.

For the UN as an organization, even admitting to using intelligence has been difficult and distasteful. The UN has long maintained that it does not engage in intelligence operations and has preferred to refer only to its information needs.

In deference to UN sensibilities, both Canadian and US military directives instruct their personnel engaged in UN peacekeeping operations to keep their terminology in line with UN preferences. Some of the civilian entities of the UN have been reluctant

to be involved with peacekeeping because it might tarnish their own humanitarian images.

Nonetheless, every UN Secretary General has expressed a need for better information for strategic decision making, and the UN investigation of attacks on UN personnel in Somalia concluded that, "The need to satisfy the UN's requirement for reliable information and intelligence gathering capability is important if peace enforcement operations are to be successfully carried out." A study produced by the UN Protection Force (Yugoslavia) argued strongly that peacekeeping against active opposition demands an intelligence function (Ramsbotham 1995, p. 162; Johnston 1997, pp. 103-4).

A Situation Centre was established within the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) in April of 1993. It operates around the clock, includes representation from the Department of Humanitarian Affairs, and has a limited analytic capability. It also has acquired the US-developed Joint Deployable Intelligence Support System (JDISS), which has greatly improved its theoretical ability to communicate with UN field elements and with any other country that has the same equipment. In fact, with personnel assigned to the Centre by their own governments for limited tours and with little technical training, the ability to use JDISS and other sophisticated systems has been limited (Ramsbotham 1995, pp. 169-171).

Every UN peacekeeping operation for the last decade or so has had intelligence elements, usually integrated into the national contingents, and most have developed multinationally-staffed headquarters elements as well. Enough experience has accumulated to generate a substantial military intelligence literature on intelligence support to peacekeeping operations in the US. After-action studies of US participation in operations such as Somalia, Haiti and Bosnia have concluded that human source intelligence often is more critical to success than the high-technology systems on which the US military tends to rely, and that other countries often are more effective than the US in gathering human source information. Academic observers also stress the importance of intelligence shortcomings at the operational, as opposed to the strategic, level. (Pickert 1997; Eriksson 1997, p. 1-6; Smith 1994, pp. 176-177; Johnston 1997, pp. 109-110).

The US has been more vocal than other UN members in publicly acknowledging the role of intelligence in making the UN more effective. In a speech to the UN General Assembly in September 1992, President Bush urged the UN members to take a number of steps to strengthen the UN including developing its planning, crisis management and intelligence capabilities. His January 1993 National Security Strategy Paper declared that, "US intelligence today is...being used in dramatically new ways, such

as assisting the international organizations like the United Nations when called upon in support of crucial peacekeeping, humanitarian assistance and arms control efforts. We will share information and assets that strengthen peaceful relationships and aid in building confidence," (Pickert 1997, p. 407; Smith 1994, p. 184).

The Clinton Administration adopted the same thrust; it set out in 1993 to develop a Presidential Decision Directive (PDD) on multilateral peacekeeping operations that would lay out a forward-leaning US policy on participation in peacekeeping, including provision of intelligence information. Enthusiasm for the UN is not universal in US political circles, however; to some, particularly in Congress, cooperation with the UN is "incredibly naive" and "caving in to one-world government." Considerable controversy ensued over the conditions and command arrangements under which US military personnel could be committed to UN peacekeeping operations. The PDD finally unveiled in May 1994 said, *inter alia*, that the US would support stronger UN planning, logistics, information and command and control capabilities. It recommended reorganization of DPKO to include separate divisions for plans, information and research, operations, and logistics (Pickert 1997, pp. 395-431; McKinnon, 1999, pp. 32-54).

These recommendations served to codify changes already made by DPKO, with US encouragement, while the PDD was being debated. The US provided personnel and equipment to support the Situation Centre and establish the information and research element, and it provided a stream of intelligence-based information, duly sanitized by the intelligence organizations providing it and funnelled through the Defense Intelligence Agency, to support several specific operations and to facilitate planning for possible future peacekeeping and humanitarian operations (Pickert 1997, pp. 440-445).

Nor are peacekeeping efforts the only UN activities receiving US intelligence. Monitors overseeing UN-imposed economic sanctions depend heavily on information provided by governments supporting the sanctions effort. Information derived from imagery has played a key role in detecting and documenting genocide in Rwanda/Burundi, Bosnia, and Kosovo, and it presumably will play a critical role as evidence in the war crimes trials to come. Imagery-derived maps and related reports have greatly improved the timeliness and effectiveness of UN relief operations on many occasions. The UN High Commissioner for Refugees also has been the recipient of a considerable volume of information (US State Dept. 1996; Pickert 1997, pp. 75-98; Constantine 1995, p.13; NYTimes June 10, 1999).

Of course, many other UN member countries also share intelligence with the UN in one fashion or another, most often through informal exchanges between their own personnel and those of the

UN. UN elements share information with each other, with specific member nations, and with NGOs. Some of the most valuable information is available from civilians and officials caught up in the conflict, disaster or genocide in question, although this information is not sought as systematically as could be wished (Eriksson 1997, pp. 9-10).

To date, the most intensive use of governmentally-supplied information has been made by UNSCOM. In creating UNSCOM, the Security Council agreed to unprecedented intrusive measures against a sovereign member state. Over time, as the Iraqis stonewalled inspection efforts, UNSCOM evolved into a complex organization devoted to uncovering Iraq's concealment activities. The US provided the U-2 planes that produced reconnaissance photos for UNSCOM. UNSCOM relied heavily on intelligence inputs from the US, the UK, Israel - and presumably many others of the countries that were former arms suppliers to Iraq and actively supported the UNSCOM effort. Difficulties arose, however, because providers of information were not willing to discuss sources, and failures to find suspected materials undermined confidence in the accuracy of information. As of this writing, detailed arrangements for a successor organization apparently have not been formalized, but clearly its success will depend in no small measure on access to intelligence from national governments (Wise 1999; Washington Post September 29, 1998; NYTimes January 17, 1999; Kay 1997; Ritter 1999).

The US has developed elaborate formal procedures for providing intelligence to the UN, but no clear-cut rules have yet been formulated about how the broader network of relationships works. Each new case is unique, and the procedures have to be worked out laboriously in light of specific circumstances. But perhaps some generalizations drawn from my observations of recent US intelligence relationships with the UN will be useful in thinking about intelligence sharing in and with the UN and other international organizations in the 21st Century.

Increasing Effective Use of Intelligence in International Organizations

It is difficult, but not impossible, for a country or its leadership to behave so badly that even the most fissiparous international organization will unite in opposition. Iraq's behavior toward Kuwait and toward its own citizens permitted - almost demanded - virtually unanimous support for economic sanctions and the UNSCOM regime that lasted for almost eight years. Every time the competing national interests of the permanent members of the Security Council seemed to be leading to limits on UNSCOM, the Iraqis said or did something to destroy their opportunity. Milosevic has no one but himself to blame for US/Russian cooperation in

the Balkans. The horrors of the slaughter in Rwanda and Burundi made it impossible for the world to stand aside. And it is the unity of purpose engendered by outlaw behavior that makes nations willing to share even some quite sensitive intelligence information in new and different ways.

The UN has traditionally refused to provide information on the activities of its member states to one another. But this makes it almost impossible for the UN to disseminate information to its field elements and operations about arms flows, financial support, movement of materials relevant to weapons of mass destruction and a host of other topics that are fundamental to enforcing sanctions. The larger the international organization involved, the less it can afford to eschew sharing information on its member states with others who are working to ensure compliance.

Much of the information necessary to support a humanitarian operation or a peacekeeping mission is not really sensitive. In either case, information on ports, roads, airports, railroads, telecommunications, population concentrations, the normal flows of goods and services, medical facilities, epidemiologic information, geography and climate is essential. But trying to assemble such information after an emergency has begun is time consuming and difficult; moreover, that information may suddenly become sensitive, while a periodic request to all members for the same elements of information should not inspire the same protective reactions. In fact, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs recently has begun to assemble and share such information through a system known as ReliefWeb. Any international organization should assemble and periodically update a comprehensive data base on all its members, based on their contributions, as a hedge against the need for humanitarian operations before any such operations are contemplated. Not coincidentally, much of this information will prove to be useful for peace operations and sanctions enforcement as well.

The need for intelligence assistance is greatest when an international organization is undertaking preventive diplomacy or beginning to plan a new operation; after deployment, the field operation often can generate much of the information it needs. The US traditionally was reluctant to agree to share information with the UN until the Security Council had made a decision in favor of such an operation; now, however, it provides information on basic infrastructure in advance of such decisions and periodic briefings on crisis areas worldwide. The UN, for its part, has been reluctant to move beyond passive receipt of information to even such minimal active collection efforts as asking questions - especially questions on political and military factors. Thus the decision to deploy peacekeepers or sanctions monitors or a relief operation can be made without the benefit of relevant information, and

the planning process is hobbled. Member states should strive to provide as much intelligence as possible to an international organization before an irreversible commitment is made, and a structure should be in place for accomplishing this. The UN should begin actively collecting information to support operations of all kinds, emphasizing non-sensitive information from former colonial powers, neighbors, and other countries that can be expected to be knowledgeable.

In most international organizations, responsibility for assembling intelligence information will fall to military personnel. They are available in much greater numbers than their civilian counterparts, have communications resources, can be ordered around at will, and are accustomed to operating in international environments. But many of the missions carried out by international organizations will be humanitarian and/or economic in nature, and they are likely to have important political dimensions as well (Quiggin 1998, p. 205). Thus military intelligence officers will increasingly be expected to understand and use information that has not heretofore been classified as "military intelligence."

When an international organization is engaged in military operations, it needs adequate military representation of its members, as well as a strong military element in its own headquarters. A Military Staff Committee - with military representatives from each of its members - was provided for in the UN Charter. It still meets, but it took its last substantive action in 1948 (Ramsbotham 1995, p. 168). That Committee should be given new life, and any international organization that expects to engage in military or quasi-military operations should have a strong military staff structure capable of detailed planning and risk assessment prior to the initiation of operations.

Large and long-lived multinational organizations eventually develop a cadre of permanent personnel. Many of them owe their primary allegiance to the organization, rather than the country of their birth. Some individuals have, in fact, left their native countries to escape persecution or because of political differences with the existing government. Some have closer ties to some other country than their own. Neither nationality nor country of birth can be trusted to be a reliable guide to judge whether intelligence information can safely be shared.

The larger the international organization, the less likely it is that sensitive information can be protected for any length of time. It is rarely practical to allocate jobs so as to control access to data. In some cases, information can be shared orally with one or two individuals without fear of compromise. But it is generally wise to assume that information given to an international organization is potentially available to all its members before long.

Individuals working with and for international organizations are most likely to handle information sensibly in the short run when it is in their self-interest to do so. Peacekeepers or humanitarian operations officials in a situation of danger have every reason to protect information from those who may shoot at them; they also have good reason to share it with NGO representatives; the latter often can provide information of equal or greater value. Personnel enforcing economic sanctions will try to protect information that promises to enhance their success and consequent compensation. Moreover, much of this tactical information has value only for hours or days. Failure to share information was a major source of the problems that befell the US-led Somalia operation (Smith 1994, p.178). In an operational situation, decisions about intelligence sharing must be made in the field, not at headquarters.

Intelligence from technical sources is inherently more believable than intelligence from human sources. It also is often less vulnerable to compromise, at least in conditions of low-intensity conflict. Technologies once unique to intelligence are increasingly available on the commercial market - for example, West German contractors are collecting land-based imagery in Kosovo on behalf of the war crimes tribunal. Satellite data is available commercially from both the French and the Russians, as well as the US-owned Ikonos satellite launched in September 1999 (Washington Post, July 18, 1999 & September 25, 1999; Smith 1994, p. 185). There may be circumstances in which it would be worthwhile for the UN to buy or lease unmanned aerial vehicles for reconnaissance purposes. Every effort should be made to maximize use and sharing of technically-based information.

Senior officials who do not come from intelligence-rich environments tend to have exaggerated expectations of what even the most sophisticated intelligence systems can provide. They ask for the moon and believe that someone is holding out on them if the moon is not delivered in short order. This problem stems partly from the grandiose descriptions in the press of various intelligence capabilities and partly from the fact that intelligence systems may be worldwide without being equally capable in all geographic areas and weather conditions. Because information on the capabilities and limitations of intelligence systems is inevitably sensitive, this problem can be ameliorated but not solved. Early and frequent communication with the senior officials of an international organization or operation about what can realistically be expected can help.

Analytic intelligence products shorn of their evidentiary base are not likely to be accepted at face value by multinational organizations if they conflict with conventional wisdom or support one side of an international argument. Analysis, like human source

intelligence, is viewed skeptically as potentially biased by national policy interests. If the products are of sufficient importance to justify sharing, they should be released to the international organization with as much supporting data as possible.

Realistically, however, member nations will find it difficult to share analytic judgments, or supporting evidence, that reflects badly on other friendly governments or on their own earlier behavior. Moreover, the analytic perspective of the international organization will necessarily differ from a purely national one. Any international organization that has a need for intelligence, including the UN, also has a need for an analytic element to serve its senior officials and provide both the organizational leadership and the member states with an overview that supplements the national views put forth by members (UNA/USA, 1997; Kay 1997).

Tactical signals intelligence (SIGINT) is essential to peacekeeping operations and can also make a significant contribution to humanitarian operations, sanctions enforcement, arms control regimes, and many other activities in which international organizations engage. In much of the third world, neither the techniques nor the technology in use are particularly difficult or sensitive, although this is constantly changing. Every international organization that intends to engage in such operations, including the UN, should develop and maintain an integral tactical SIGINT capability and adequate on-call reserves. Peacekeeping units can, of course, be expected to bring their own SIGINT resources to any mission.

Technology can be a blessing or a curse in international organizations. In the Persian Gulf War, the collection systems were superb, but US forces suffered from incompatible dissemination systems across the military services. On an international level, this problem is far greater. And it is compounded by differing training and skill levels of personnel from a variety of nations, operating in a variety of languages. International organizations need to keep their systems as simple as possible and to select equipment and develop procedures for use by the least educated and talented of their contingents. They need to pay continual attention to training personnel to make the most of such systems. Members should agree to leave personnel in place for extended periods; working in an international environment is harder than working in a national one.

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